



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### THE INFLUENCE OF EMPLOYEE POSITION ON THE PERCEIVED TIMELINESS OF GRIEVANCE RESOLUTION IN GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES AND PARASTATALS IN IMO AND DELTA STATES

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#### ABSTRACT

Grievance resolution timeliness is a critical component of procedural justice, significantly shaping employee perceptions of fairness and trust within an organization. This study investigated the influence of employee position and state of employment on the perceived timeliness of grievance resolution within government ministries and parastatals in Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey design was employed, with data collected from 319 employees across 20 selected public institutions in Imo and Delta States. The hypotheses were tested using a Two-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The results revealed a statistically significant main effect for employee position on perceived timeliness,  $F(3, 289) = 9.570$ ,  $p = .000$ , indicating that perceptions differ across organizational ranks. A post hoc analysis confirmed a hierarchical pattern, with management staff ( $M = 3.26$ ) perceiving significantly faster resolution than junior ( $M = 2.55$ ) and casual staff ( $M = 2.37$ ). However, the study found no significant difference in perceived timeliness between employees in Imo and Delta States,  $F(1, 289) = 0.963$ ,  $p = .327$ , and no significant interaction effect between employee position and state,  $F(3, 289) = 0.243$ ,  $p = .866$ . The study concludes that an employee's position is a key determinant of their experience with grievance resolution, highlighting a systemic inequity in the public sector that is consistent across different states.

**Keywords:** Grievance resolution, perceived timeliness, employee position, organizational justice, public sector.

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## 1.0. INTRODUCTION

Employee grievances are formal complaints filed by workers who feel they have been unfairly treated or their rights violated at work. Such grievances typically concern wages, working conditions, disciplinary actions, and other employment terms (Lewin, 2020). Effective grievance management is essential for maintaining industrial harmony and high employee morale (Wesonga and Van Der Westhuizen, 2024). As Obiekwe and Eke (2019) notes that prompt and fair handling of complaints is essential for harmonious workplace relationships, bolstering employee loyalty and commitment, as well as improvement of overall organizational productivity. Conversely, neglected grievances can severely damage organizations: unresolved disputes lead to reduced productivity, increased absenteeism, indiscipline, and lower quality of work (Obiekwe and Eke, 2019). Chronic grievance problems also depress job satisfaction and can drive valued staff to leave. Indeed, research in Nigeria's industrial sector finds that poor grievance procedures contribute to labor turnover and its attendant costs (e.g. low productivity and higher overhead) (Kumar Sharma, 2021). Moreover, an ineffective complaint system may expose employers to legal risk: dissatisfied employees are more likely to escalate issues externally if internal redress is unsatisfactory (Brennan *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, managing employee grievances fairly and quickly is critical to sustaining morale, reducing conflict, and avoiding costly disruptions.

In Nigeria's public sector context, these issues take on special importance. Government ministries and related agencies (parastatals) operate within a large bureaucratic civil service system (Magbadelo, 2016; Asaju and Ayeni, 2021). Ministries and parastatals are civil-service departments responsible for delivering government services, each headed by a Permanent Secretary under a Minister. Because the civil service carries out policy implementation and public administration, its efficiency directly affects governance and national development (Ijewereme, 2018). As Tom *et al.* (2024) emphasizes that efficient and effective organizational productivity of the Civil Service are critical to sustainable socio-economic development of any nation. However, Nigeria's public sector is widely criticized for low productivity and inefficient service delivery (Eneanya, 2018). In this context, employee satisfaction is recognized as a key driver of performance: scholars note that an organization's growth depends on its workers' satisfaction, and that high satisfaction strongly correlates with better organizational performance (Bakotić, 2016; Rodrigo *et al.*, 2022). In other words, keeping civil servants engaged and content is important for effective government (Hadiyantina, 2021). This study focuses on Imo and Delta States as representative examples of this setting, where ministries and parastatals must manage large workforces under bureaucratic constraints.

A crucial dimension of grievance management is timeliness. Employees expect complaints to be resolved promptly; timely attention signals respect and fairness (Colquitt and Zipay, 2015). Research on grievance systems and procedural justice indicates that a responsive



complaint process fosters trust and commitment (Schulenberg *et al.*, 2017; Hossain *et al.*, 2024). For example, studies find that employees who trust the complaint resolution process are more likely to share concerns [and] satisfied employees are less likely to take their complaints to outsiders (Ethics Resource Center, 2013), while effective grievance resolution can enhance employee loyalty and commitment (Obiekwe and Eke, 2019). Conversely, delays and haphazard handling undermine morale and the perception of justice (Saitoti, 2024). An efficient grievance system thus handles issues in a timely manner, ensuring both action and final decisions are reached without unnecessary delay (Verlinden, 2025). Crucially, employees' perceptions of timeliness (how quickly they *feel* a case was handled) matter almost as much as objective speed. If workers believe their grievances are addressed quickly and fairly, they are more likely to see the organization as just. In practice, Nigerian experts stress that "grievances should be handled as quickly as possible to minimize negative consequences of unresolved grievances (Obiekwe and Eke, 2019). Thus, the perceived swiftness of resolution is a key component of organizational justice: it helps maintain trust in management and prevents small issues from festering.

A central factor in this study is employee position in the organizational hierarchy. Government ministries and parastatals are explicitly hierarchical. By design, offices and officials are arranged from the most junior levels up through senior management (Usman, 2023). In Nigeria's civil service, staff are classified into administrative, professional, executive, clerical and other grades (Okorie and Onwe, 2016; Ezeji *et al.*, 2023). Given this structure, it is plausible that rank could influence grievance outcomes. Higher-ranking employees may have more informal access to supervisors or greater influence, while junior staff may find it harder to have their concerns heard (Smith, 2020). For instance, a typical grievance procedure ascends through multiple layers of management: if a complaint cannot be resolved at the first level, it is appealed upward to higher officials (DavidsonMorris, 2025). In fact, Atairet and Ndaeyo (2022) observes that it is impossible for all grievances to be settled by first-line supervisors. This stair-step process could advantage senior employees, who might expedite matters or leverage their networks. Moreover, patterns of favoritism or nepotism have been noted in Nigerian offices, suggesting that social rank can shape how problems are handled (Ojizele and Ojo, 2024). Together, these considerations suggest that rank-and-file and managerial employees may experience the grievance process quite differently.

Despite ample discussion of grievance systems in Nigeria, research has largely overlooked this hierarchical dimension. Existing studies emphasize the importance of fairness, representation, and promptness in grievance procedures (Assafuah, 2017; Aktar, 2021; Wesonga and Van Der Westhuizen, 2024), but they typically treat the system as uniform for all employees. While scholars agree that voice and swift response are keys to procedural justice, few have analyzed whether those goals are perceived equally across ranks (McCabe, 2019; Lewin, 2020). In other words, there is a gap in understanding how an employee's



position within the bureaucracy affects their *perception* of how timely (and thus how fair) grievance resolution is. This study addresses that gap. It examines the relationship between employee position and perceived timeliness of grievance handling in Imo and Delta State ministries and parastatals.

### **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

Grievance resolution is a fundamental aspect of organizational justice and employee relations, yet many public institutions continue to struggle with ensuring prompt and satisfactory handling of employee complaints. In many cases, the time it takes to resolve grievances can significantly affect employee trust, morale, and willingness to engage with management processes. When resolution is delayed, it not only exacerbates workplace dissatisfaction but may also lead to a breakdown in communication, increased absenteeism, and even open conflict. Timeliness is therefore not a luxury but a core expectation of any effective grievance management system.

However, in hierarchical organizations, such as government ministries and parastatals, there is growing concern that an employee's rank may affect how swiftly their grievance is addressed. Junior staff often feel their issues are sidelined, while senior officials may receive expedited attention. This creates a perception of inequality that undermines organizational fairness and trust. If grievance procedures are informally influenced by employee status, then the principles of transparency, justice, and equal treatment are compromised. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the influence of employee position on the perceived timeliness of grievance resolution within government ministries and parastatals in Imo and Delta States, where these hierarchical dynamics are pronounced.

### **1.2. Research Objectives**

The general objective of this study is to examine the influence of employee position on the perceived timeliness of grievance resolution in government ministries and parastatals in Imo State and Delta State. The specific objectives of this study include

1. To determine the influence of an employee's position on their perceived timeliness of grievance resolution in the selected government ministries and parastatals.
2. To compare the perceived timeliness of grievance resolution between employees in Imo State and Delta State.
3. To examine whether the influence of an employee's position on their perceived timeliness of grievance resolution differs significantly between Imo and Delta States.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study



1. Is there a significant difference in the perceived timeliness of grievance resolution across different employee positions (i.e., Junior Staff, Senior Staff, Management Staff, Casual Staff)?
2. Is there a significant difference in the perceived timeliness of grievance resolution between employees in Imo State and Delta State?
3. Does the influence of an employee's position on their perceived timeliness of grievance resolution depend on whether they work in Imo State or Delta State?

#### 1.4. Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated to be tested at a 0.05 level of significance

1. **H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no statistically significant difference in the mean perceived timeliness of grievance resolution across the different employee positions.
2. **H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no statistically significant difference in the mean perceived timeliness of grievance resolution between employees in Imo State and Delta State.
3. **H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no statistically significant interaction effect between employee position and state on the perceived timeliness of grievance resolution.

## 2.0. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### 2.1. Conceptual Framework

#### 2.1.1. Employee Grievance

An *employee grievance* is generally understood as any formal complaint by a worker (or group of workers) about unfair or unsatisfactory conditions of employment (Opatha, 2019). The International Labour Organization (2018) defines a grievance as a complaint of one or more workers in respect of wages, allowances, conditions of work and interpretation of service stipulations, [job] assignment, or termination of service. In practice, management scholars similarly describe grievances as employees' expressions of gripes, discontent and frustration over workplace issues (Kirk, 2015; Reinartz and Wynter, 2019). In every organization, unresolved grievances can undermine morale and cooperation, so robust grievance mechanisms are essential (Naagar, 2024).

In the context of Nigerian government ministries and parastatals (the public sector agencies under executive ministries), the term applies in the same way. Here employees are civil servants who bring complaints under civil service rules and regulations (Akinsanmi *et al.*, 2022). Common grievances in Nigerian ministries and parastatals include disputes over salary/promotion, allowances, transfer or secondment, leave entitlements, workplace discipline, and perceived favoritism or discrimination (Ataire and Ndaeyo, 2022). For example, Nigeria's Public Service Rules explicitly address how complaints about postings,





promotions or discipline are to be handled by service boards or commissions (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2023). In the literature on Nigeria's civil service, it is noted that grievance procedures serve to protect employees against arbitrary management actions and to retain staff by providing a formal outlet for complaints (Atairet and Ndaeyo, 2022). Thus, in this study *employee grievance* refers to any formal complaint by a ministry or parastatal worker about their terms of employment or treatment; the types of issues covered under Nigeria's established public service grievance channels.

### **2.1.2. Grievance Resolution**

*Grievance resolution* is the process through which an organization addresses and settles these employee complaints. It typically involves defined steps: an employee lodges a complaint (often first to a supervisor), management investigates the issue, and a decision or corrective action is proposed; employees may then appeal if dissatisfied (Opatha, 2019; Saitoti, 2024). Scholars emphasize that grievance procedures are a fundamental component of labor-management relations. For instance, Taylor (2024) notes that grievance procedures are an important cornerstone in the industrial relations edifice. In other words, grievance resolution mechanisms are expected to provide a fair hearing and a clear resolution path (van Huijstee and Wilde-Ramsing, 2020).

Effective grievance resolution procedures are characterized by formal rules and fairness (Morris, 2025). Johnson (2024) identifies several key features of a well-designed grievance system: it must guarantee fairness, allow employee representation, specify clear procedural steps, and resolve issues promptly. In practice this means that the organization outlines who can handle a grievance, how and when hearings take place, and what remedies are possible (Rees, 2011). Scholars further stress that grievance processes should ensure an opportunity for employees to be heard and for cases to be reviewed impartially (Lewin, 2020; Neall *et al.*, 2021). In essence, grievance resolution is the structured mechanism (often multi-step) by which an employer investigates complaints and takes appropriate action. Its goal is to restore a fair working condition or adjudicate disputes so that employees and management can move forward with a sense of justice (Johnson, 2024).

### **2.1.3 Timeliness of Grievance Resolution**

Timeliness is widely recognized as a critical dimension of fair grievance handling. A grievance system is not only judged on *what* outcome it delivers, but also *how quickly* it delivers it (Wesonga and Van Der Westhuizen, 2024). Academic analyses link prompt processing to procedural justice: delays tend to be seen as unfair. Aktar (2021), for example, argue that an effective grievance system should be efficient and responsive, handling employee complaints in a timely manner and ensuring that resolutions are reached promptly (Guerin, 2022). In other words, a high-quality grievance process actively minimizes delays at



every stage from the initial filing to the final appeal (Wesonga and Van Der Westhuizen, 2024).

Empirical studies support the importance of speed. Aktar (2021) found that faster grievance handling was strongly associated with higher employee satisfaction: timely grievance resolution showed an exceptionally high positive correlation with overall worker satisfaction (correlation  $\approx 0.690$ ). Conversely, when grievances drag on, employees feel ignored or devalued. The literature notes that slow or protracted grievance processes can exacerbate employee frustration and erode trust in management (Aktar, 2021; Anwar and Sudha, 2025). Thus, timeliness of grievance resolution is itself a key indicator of procedural justice and organizational responsiveness.

#### **2.1.4. Employee Position**

The term *employee position* generally refers to an individual's place in the organizational hierarchy which can be their rank, grade or level of authority (Kanter, 2019). In bureaucratic organizations like government ministries and parastatals, positions are formally structured in classes and grades (Bamidele, 2013). For example, Nigeria's civil service is officially divided into classes such as administrative, executive, professional, clerical, and manipulative. Each class contains grades (e.g. Senior Level, Director Level) that span the hierarchy from junior staff up to top executives (Ezeji *et al.*, 2023). By definition, higher positions hold more authority: one analyst defines a civil service hierarchy as the organization or arrangement of offices and officials of various ranks and grades in a systematic order from below to the top in [a] superior–subordinate relationship (Smalskys and Urbanovič, 2017). In practical terms, this means senior managers and directors are at the top of the pyramid, while clerical or lower-grade officers occupy the bottom (Schulker *et al.*, 2024). Higher positions also carry greater compensation, the higher the position, the higher the compensation, and entail more decision-making power (Lammers, 2019).

Employee position matters for grievance resolution because rank can influence both the grievances employees raise and how those grievances are handled. Senior officers may have greater informal influence or access to grievance channels (for example, they often deal directly with human resources or service commissions), whereas junior staff depend entirely on line managers and formal procedures (Nosike *et al.*, 2024). Similarly, certain types of grievances differ by level (a junior clerk may complain about working hours or leave, while a director may contest a failed promotion) (Atairet and Ndaeyo, 2022). In the context of Nigerian ministries and parastatals, the rigid grade structure means that a lower-level employee might have a longer chain of command to escalate a complaint, or might fear reprisals more acutely than someone in a protected senior post. Thus, the *position* of an employee is conceptually relevant to how timely and effectively their grievances are perceived to be resolved (Atairet and Ndaeyo, 2022). This study examines how differences in



position (from junior staff to senior managers) correlate with perceptions of the speed of grievance resolution in these public organizations.

## **2.2. Theoretical Framework**

This study is framed by Total Quality Management (TQM) Theory. TQM emerged in the late 20th century (notably articulated in Deming's *Out of the Crisis*, 1982 and Juran's quality manuals in the 1980s) as a comprehensive approach to organizational excellence. At its core, TQM asserts that long-term success comes from continuous improvement and by fully involving all stakeholders, especially customers and employees. Key principles of TQM include a strong customer focus, process orientation, and continual incremental improvement of all activities (Martínez-Lorente *et al.*, 1998). The American Society for Quality (2024) notes that TQM views the organization as a customer-focused system that engages all employees in continual improvement. It emphasizes that meeting or exceeding customer (external or internal) expectations is the primary goal, and that every employee, regardless of their level or role, should participate in quality initiatives. In practice, TQM encourages fact-based decision-making, integrated processes, and a culture of empowerment and accountability.

In applying TQM to this study of grievances, employees themselves can be seen as *internal customers* of the organization's service processes. Under a TQM lens, the grievance resolution process should be managed as a quality process: employees have expectations that complaints will be heard promptly and fairly, and any inefficiency or delay is a defect that the system must correct. Thus, TQM suggests organizations should continuously improve grievance procedures just as they improve product or service processes. Specifically, TQM's emphasis on efficiency and responsiveness maps onto grievance management: one TQM tenet is that processes should be efficient and responsive, producing results quickly, exactly the quality expected in grievance handling. By analogy, a ministry that promptly addresses complaints is satisfying its internal customers. Therefore, this study uses TQM to interpret findings: the study examine how employee position relates to perceived timeliness of grievance resolution as an indicator of the quality of the grievance process. If grievances are analogous to quality complaints, then a shorter resolution time signals better quality management. Hence, TQM theory guides the study to treat grievance redress as a continual improvement process, so that differences by employee position may reflect underlying quality of service in the organizational grievance system.

## **2.3. Empirical Studies**

Studies have been conducted on various facets of grievance management, organizational justice, and their effects on employee performance and commitment across different sectors.





Bariki *et al.* (2024) assessed the grievance redress mechanisms (GRMs) of the Adamawa State Multisectoral Crisis Recovery Project (AS-MCRP), which addresses impacts of the Boko Haram insurgency. Objectives were to evaluate GRM accessibility, awareness, effectiveness, and impact on trust and social cohesion. Using a descriptive survey design, 100 respondents were sampled from a population of 20,000 across three local government areas via cluster and random sampling. Data from key informant interviews were analyzed using content analysis and descriptive statistics. Results indicated that while the GRMs were highly accessible, public awareness was low. The mechanisms proved highly effective, resolving 164 of 176 grievances (93.2%) between 2019 and 2023, with a 100% success rate in 2019, 2020, and 2021. The study found the GRMs contributed significantly to rebuilding trust and community resilience. The authors concluded that the GRMs are effective but their impact is hindered by low awareness.

Nwaka and Onyeizugbe (2024) studied grievance management's effect on the performance of 383 non-academic employees in public universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. Anchored on Stakeholder Engagement Theory, the study aimed to determine the relationship between collective bargaining and morale, and between open door policy and commitment. A survey design targeted a population of 9,098 staff, with the sample determined by the Taro Yamane formula. Using a validated questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of .902, data were analyzed using Pearson's correlation at a 0.05 significance level. The result shows a significant, strong positive relationship between collective bargaining and employee morale ( $r = .918$ ,  $p < .05$ ), as well as between an open door policy and employee commitment ( $r = .887$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The study concluded that grievance management has a significant positive relationship with employee performance.

Wesonga and Van Der Westhuizen (2024) investigated the role of grievance handling styles on the performance of 240 staff members at Longisa Referral Hospital in Kenya. The primary objective, framed by Organizational Justice Theory, was to analyze how different processing styles (integrating, obliging, dominating, etc.) affect performance. The study used a case study design with a census approach targeting 307 hospital professionals, achieving a 78% response rate. Data collected from a reliable questionnaire (Cronbach's alpha = 0.866) were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and Chi-square tests. The result shows a significant positive correlation between grievance handling styles and employee performance ( $r = 0.547$ ,  $p = .000$ ). The Chi-square test also confirmed this significant relationship ( $\chi^2 = 1399.540$ ,  $p = .000$ ), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The authors concluded that grievance handling methods significantly impact staff performance and that implementing fair, transparent, and proactive procedures is crucial for creating a healthy work environment and improving organizational success.



Nosike *et al.* (2023) analyzed the effect of employee grievance on performance at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, using a sample of 311 academic staff. The objectives were to determine the effect of employee dissatisfaction and perceived unfair practices on job commitment. A descriptive survey research design targeted a population of 2,637 staff, with data from a structured questionnaire analyzed using Simple Regression at a 5% significance level. The result shows that employee dissatisfaction had a significant effect on job commitment, with the model yielding an adjusted R-squared of .996, a Beta of .998, and a p-value of .000. This indicates that 99.6% of the variance in commitment was explained by dissatisfaction. Similarly, perceived unfair practices significantly affected job commitment, with an adjusted R-squared of .988, a Beta of .994, and a p-value of .001. The researchers concluded that employee grievances are significant determinants of job commitment and institutional performance.

Ajulor *et al.* (2021) studied organizational justice and its effect on the work commitment of 134 firefighters in the Lagos State Fire Service. Framed by equity and social exchange theories, the study aimed to examine how distributive, procedural, and interactional justice influence public servant commitment. A survey research design was used, collecting data from a population of 507 firefighters through questionnaires and interviews. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation at a 0.05 significance level. The result shows a strong, direct, and significant relationship between all three justice dimensions and commitment: distributive justice ( $r = .832$ ,  $p = .000$ ), procedural justice ( $r = .662$ ,  $p = .001$ ), and interactional justice ( $r = .553$ ,  $p = .000$ ). The study concluded that perceptions of injustice are a significant barrier to commitment in the public sector.

Chukwuemeka *et al.* (2012) investigated industrial conflict and management within the Nigerian Local Government System, focusing on 401 workers in Enugu State. The objectives were to examine links between leadership style and conflict, trade disputes and strikes, and the impact of "zero allocation" funding. A descriptive research method, combining a survey and case study, was used. From a population of 10,100 workers, the sample was selected using the Yamane formula and data were analyzed with correlation and chi-square tests. The result shows a high positive correlation between trade disputes and strikes ( $r = +0.84$ ). However, labor conflict was found to be independent of leadership style, as the calculated chi-square of 31.95 was significantly greater than the critical value of 9.488 at a 0.05 significance level. Poor funding was identified as the primary factor inducing conflict. The authors concluded that leadership ineffectiveness, severe funding shortages, and lack of employee involvement are the main drivers of industrial unrest.

While previous studies have extensively examined the impact of grievance management on employee performance and commitment, a notable gap exists in understanding how an employee's hierarchical position influences their perception of the process. Specifically, the literature has not adequately addressed the perceived timeliness of grievance resolution as



experienced by employees at different organizational levels, nor has it undertaken a comparative analysis of this dynamic across different state government parastatals.

### **3.0. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**3.1. Research Design:** This study employed a cross-sectional survey design to examine the influence of employee position on the perceived timeliness of grievance resolution in government ministries and parastatals in Imo State and Delta State. This approach allowed for the collection of quantitative data from employees across different hierarchical levels and states at a single point in time, enabling a comparative analysis of their perceptions.

### **3.2. Study Area and Population**

The study was conducted in government ministries and parastatals in Imo and Delta states, Nigeria. The population included employees across various hierarchical positions within these public institutions who were involved in or affected by grievance resolution processes.

### **3.3. Sampling and Data Collection**

The study population comprised 1,860 employees from 20 selected ministries and parastatals, with 962 employees from Delta State and 898 from Imo State. Given the finite population, Cochran's formula was used to determine the minimum required sample size at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, yielding approximately 319 respondents. The distribution of this sample was then calculated using Bowley's Proportion method, which allocated 165 participants to Delta State and 154 to Imo State. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, validated by expert review and pilot testing. The instrument used Likert scales and demographic questions to gather information on employee position and the perceived timeliness of grievance resolution.

### **3.4. Data Analysis**

Data was analyzed using SPSS version 27, employing both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the characteristics of the data. To test the hypotheses, a Two-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted as the key inferential statistic. This method was appropriate as it allowed the study to examine the main effects of the two independent variables (employee position and state) on the perceived timeliness of grievance resolution, as well as the interaction effect between these two variables, directly addressing the three null hypotheses.

**Ethical Considerations:** The study adhered to ethical guidelines, obtaining necessary approvals and informed consent from participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process.



**Limitations:** Limitations included the cross-sectional nature of the study, potential response biases, and the focus on two states and formal grievance systems, which may not have been fully representative of the entire Nigerian public sector or captured informal grievance resolution practices.

**Decision Rule:** The decision in the analysis section is determined by the average of the responses of respondents. Therefore, a mean score below 3.0 would be considered rejected and a mean score of 3.0 and above would be considered accepted. For the hypotheses, the null hypothesis for each test will be rejected if the calculated p-value is less than the significance level of 0.05; otherwise, the null hypothesis will be accepted.

## 4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Results

This section is concerned with the presentation and analysis of data collected from the field of study and the test of hypotheses.

**Table 1: Socio-demographic Information of Respondents**

Variable	Options	Imo State (n = 154)	Delta State (n = 165)	Total (n = 319)
Gender	Male	82 (53.2%)	98 (59.4%)	180 (56.4%)
	Female	72 (46.8%)	67 (40.6%)	139 (43.6%)
Age	18 – 29	35 (22.7%)	28 (17.0%)	63 (19.7%)
	30 – 45	73 (47.4%)	85 (51.5%)	158 (49.5%)
	46 – 55	31 (20.1%)	42 (25.5%)	73 (22.9%)
	Above 55 years	15 (9.8%)	10 (6.0%)	25 (7.8%)
	Mgt staff (above GL 14)	12 (7.8%)	18 (10.9%)	30 (9.4%)
Role/Position	Senior staff (GL 8 - 14)	59 (38.3%)	76 (46.1%)	135 (42.3%)
	Junior staff (GL 1 - 7)	67 (43.5%)	58 (35.2%)	125 (39.2%)
	Casual staff	16 (10.4%)	13 (7.8%)	29 (9.1%)
Length of Service	Less than 1 year	18 (11.7%)	12 (7.3%)	30 (9.4%)
	1-5 years	52 (33.8%)	45 (27.3%)	97 (30.4%)
	6-10 years	53 (34.4%)	68 (41.2%)	121 (37.9%)
	More than 10 years	31 (20.1%)	40 (24.2%)	71 (22.3%)
Academic Level	Tertiary	133 (86.4%)	162 (98.2%)	295 (92.5%)
	Secondary	21 (13.6%)	3 (1.8%)	24 (7.5%)
Experience with Grievances	Yes	139 (90.3%)	158 (95.8%)	297 (93.1%)
	No	15 (9.7%)	7 (4.2%)	22 (6.9%)

Source: Authors' Analysis (2024).

An analysis of the sociodemographic information in Table 1 highlights several key attributes of the respondents. In terms of gender distribution, males constituted the larger portion of the sample with 180 individuals (56.4%). The most represented age bracket was 30-45 years,



which included 158 participants (49.5%). With respect to job roles, senior staff (GL 08-14) formed the most significant group, consisting of 135 respondents (42.3%). Data on service duration indicates that the most frequent tenure was between 6 and 10 years, reported by 121 participants (37.9%). A significant majority of the respondents, totaling 295 (92.5%), had attained a tertiary level of education. Moreover, a substantial majority of 297 participants (93.1%) indicated prior experience with grievances, while only 22 (6.9%) had not.

**Table 2: Mean Ratings of Responses on Frequency of Common Grievances (n=297)**

S/N	Item	N	Mean	Std Dev	Remark
1	Pay and benefits issues	297	3.46	1.026	Accepted
2	Workload concerns	297	3.40	1.024	Accepted
3	Supervision problems	297	3.42	1.037	Accepted
4	Discrimination/favouritism	297	3.52	1.033	Accepted
5	Interpersonal conflicts	297	3.36	1.034	Accepted
6	Health and safety issues	297	3.30	1.049	Accepted
7	Career progression issues	297	3.41	1.027	Accepted
8	Work condition problems	297	3.44	1.028	Accepted
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>297</b>	<b>3.41</b>	<b>1.032</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

**Source:** Field Survey (2024).

Table 2 reveals the frequency of common grievances, with all eight measured items receiving acceptance (means > 3.0). Discrimination/favouritism emerged as the most frequent grievance (mean = 3.52, SD = 1.033), followed by pay and benefits issues (mean = 3.46, SD = 1.026), work condition problems (mean = 3.44, SD = 1.028), supervision problems (mean = 3.42, SD = 1.037), career progression issues (mean = 3.41, SD = 1.027), workload concerns (mean = 3.40, SD = 1.024), interpersonal conflicts (mean = 3.36, SD = 1.034), and health and safety issues (mean = 3.30, SD = 1.049). The grand mean of 3.41 (SD = 1.032) indicates a significant prevalence of these grievances.

**Table 3: Mean Ratings of Responses on Awareness of Grievance Management Systems**

S	Item	N	Mean	Std Dev	Remark
1	I am aware that my organization has a grievance management system	297	3.53	1.152	Accepted
2	I know the proper channels for reporting grievances	297	3.30	1.195	Accepted
3	I understand the grievance reporting procedure	297	3.11	1.184	Accepted
4	I am familiar with the timeline for grievance resolution	297	2.82	1.125	Rejected
5	I know who to contact when I have a grievance	297	3.33	1.160	Accepted
6	I have received training/information about the grievance system	297	2.85	1.172	Rejected
7	The grievance reporting process is well-communicated	297	2.92	1.144	Rejected
8	I understand my rights regarding grievance submission	297	3.18	1.167	Accepted
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>297</b>	<b>3.13</b>	<b>1.162</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

**Source:** Field Survey (2024)





Table 3 examines awareness of grievance management systems among 297 respondents. Based on the decision rule (mean  $\geq 3.0$  = accepted), five items were accepted while three were rejected. Respondents strongly acknowledged awareness of organizational grievance management systems (mean = 3.53, SD = 1.152), knowledge of proper reporting channels (mean = 3.30, SD = 1.195), understanding of grievance procedures (mean = 3.11, SD = 1.184), knowledge of whom to contact (mean = 3.33, SD = 1.160), and understanding of grievance submission rights (mean = 3.18, SD = 1.167). However, respondents rejected statements regarding familiarity with resolution timelines (mean = 2.82, SD = 1.125), receipt of training/information (mean = 2.85, SD = 1.172), and communication of reporting processes (mean = 2.92, SD = 1.144). The overall grand mean of 3.13 (SD = 1.162) indicates general acceptance of awareness levels.

**Table 4: Mean Ratings of Responses on Timeliness of Grievance Resolution (n=297)**

S/N	Item	N	Mean	Std Dev	Remark
1	Speed of acknowledgement of grievances	297	2.86	1.097	Rejected
2	Time is taken to initiate an investigation	297	2.74	1.116	Rejected
3	Duration of the investigation process	297	2.71	1.114	Rejected
4	Time taken to communicate decisions	297	2.77	1.091	Rejected
5	Overall timeliness of the resolution process	297	2.75	1.115	Rejected
6	Adherence to stated timelines	297	2.75	1.132	Rejected
7	Promptness of feedback during the process	297	2.80	1.082	Rejected
8	Speed of implementing resolved decisions	297	2.76	1.098	Rejected
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>2.77</b>	<b>1.106</b>	<b>Rejected</b>

**Source:** Field Survey (2024).

Table 4 evaluates the timeliness of grievance resolution, with all eight measured aspects receiving rejection (means  $< 3.0$ ). Speed of acknowledgement showed the highest mean (2.86, SD = 1.097), followed by promptness of feedback (mean = 2.80, SD = 1.082), time taken to communicate decisions (mean = 2.77, SD = 1.091), speed of implementing resolved decisions (mean = 2.76, SD = 1.098), adherence to stated timelines (mean = 2.75, SD = 1.132), overall timeliness (mean = 2.75, SD = 1.115), time taken to initiate investigation (mean = 2.74, SD = 1.116), and duration of investigation process (mean = 2.71, SD = 1.114). The grand mean of 2.77 (SD = 1.106) indicates significant dissatisfaction with resolution timeliness.

## 4.2 Hypotheses Testing

To test the research hypotheses, a Two-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. This statistical test was used to determine the influence of the two independent variables, Employee Position and State (Imo and Delta), on the dependent variable, the perceived timeliness of grievance resolution. The analysis also examined the interaction effect between employee position and state.



### Descriptive Statistics

Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics, showing the mean perceived timeliness of grievance resolution, standard deviation, and sample size for each group that had experience with grievances. Overall, the mean scores indicate a general perception of low timeliness across most groups, with management staff reporting slightly higher perceived timeliness compared to other positions.

**Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Timeliness of Grievance Resolution**  
Dependent Variable: Perceived Timeliness

State	Employee Position	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Imo State	Management Staff	3.18	.991	9
	Senior Staff	2.90	1.023	57
	Junior Staff	2.51	.954	58
	Casual Staff	2.35	.902	15
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2.73</b>	<b>.996</b>	<b>139</b>
Delta State	Management Staff	3.32	1.015	17
	Senior Staff	2.96	.978	71
	Junior Staff	2.59	.961	57
	Casual Staff	2.38	.918	13
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2.81</b>	<b>.991</b>	<b>158</b>
<b>Total</b>	Management Staff	3.26	1.004	26
	Senior Staff	2.93	.998	128
	Junior Staff	2.55	.957	115
	Casual Staff	2.37	.907	28
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2.77</b>	<b>1.106</b>	<b>297</b>

**Source:** Field Survey (2024).

### Tests of Variations Between-Subjects Effects

The main results of the Two-Way ANOVA are presented in Table 6. The table shows the tests for the main effects of Employee Position and State, as well as their interaction effect on the 297 respondents with grievance experience.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** *There is no statistically significant difference in the mean perceived timeliness of grievance resolution across the different employee positions.* The results from Table 6 show a statistically significant main effect for Employee Position,  $F(3, 289) = 9.570$ ,  $p = .000$ . Since the p-value is less than the alpha level of 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ). This indicates that there is a significant difference in the perceived timeliness of grievance resolution among employees based on their position.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** *There is no statistically significant difference in the mean perceived timeliness of grievance resolution between employees in Imo State and Delta State.* The main effect for State was not statistically significant,  $F(1, 289) = 0.963$ ,  $p = .327$ . As the p-value is greater



than 0.05, we accept the null hypothesis ( $H_{02}$ ). This suggests that there is no significant difference in the perceived timeliness of grievance resolution between employees in Imo State and Delta State.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** *There is no statistically significant interaction effect between employee position and state on the perceived timeliness of grievance resolution.* The interaction effect between Employee Position and State was not statistically significant,  $F(3, 289) = 0.243$ ,  $p = .866$ . Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, we accept the null hypothesis ( $H_{03}$ ). This means that the effect of an employee's position on their perceived timeliness of grievance resolution does not depend on whether they work in Imo or Delta State.

**Table 6: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Dependent Variable: Perceived Timeliness

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	30.118	7	4.303	4.792	.000
Intercept	2253.450	1	2253.450	2509.410	.000
Employee Position	25.781	3	8.594	9.570	.000
State	0.865	1	0.865	0.963	.327
Employee Position * State	0.655	3	0.218	0.243	.866
Error	259.540	289	0.898		
Total	2589.000	297			
Corrected Total	289.658	296			

Source: Field Survey (2024).

### Post Hoc Analysis

Since a significant main effect was found for Employee Position, a post hoc test using Tukey's HSD was conducted to determine which specific groups differed from one another. The results are shown in Table 7.

**Table 7: Multiple Comparisons (Tukey HSD)**

Dependent Variable: Perceived Timeliness

(I) Employee Position	(J) Employee Position	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Management Staff	Senior Staff	.330	.191	.311
	Junior Staff	.710*	.194	.001
	Casual Staff	.890*	.242	.001
Senior Staff	Junior Staff	.380*	.101	.001
	Casual Staff	.560*	.199	.019
Junior Staff	Casual Staff	.180	.201	.799

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.



The post hoc analysis reveals that Management Staff (Mean = 3.26) perceived grievance resolution as significantly more timely than both Junior Staff (Mean = 2.55) and Casual Staff (Mean = 2.37). Similarly, Senior Staff (Mean = 2.93) reported significantly higher perceived timeliness compared to Junior Staff and Casual Staff. However, there were no significant differences found between Management and Senior staff, or between Junior and Casual staff. This suggests a clear hierarchical pattern where higher-ranking employees perceive the grievance process to be faster than their lower-ranking colleagues.

### **4.3. Discussion of Findings**

This study examined the influence of employee position and state on the perceived timeliness of grievance resolution in public sector ministries and parastatals. The findings revealed that while an employee's position significantly impacts their perception of timeliness, the state in which they work does not, nor is there an interaction between these two factors.

The rejection of the first null hypothesis confirms that a significant difference exists in the perceived timeliness of grievance resolution across various employee positions. The post hoc analysis clearly demonstrated a hierarchical pattern: management and senior staff perceive the grievance process as significantly faster than their junior and casual staff counterparts. This outcome can be understood through the framework of Total Quality Management (TQM) Theory, which posits that internal processes, such as grievance handling, should be continuously improved to deliver consistent quality to all internal customers (employees). The disparity in perceived timeliness suggests a systemic "quality defect," where the service provided is not uniform across all levels. Higher-ranking employees likely benefit from greater organizational influence, informal access to decision-makers, and a higher prioritization of their issues, resulting in a more efficient experience.

Conversely, the longer perceived resolution times for lower-level staff indicate a lower quality of service, which can lead to dissatisfaction and feelings of inequity. This finding aligns with previous research highlighting the negative consequences of perceived unfairness. For instance, it provides a specific mechanism for the procedural injustice that Ajulor *et al.* (2021) found to reduce commitment. It also resonates with the work of Nosike *et al.* (2023), who linked unfair practices to poor outcomes, and with Nwaka and Onyeizugbe (2024), whose findings on the importance of an open-door policy suggest that this "door" may not be equally accessible to all ranks.

The acceptance of the second and third null hypotheses indicates that there is no significant difference in perceived timeliness between employees in Imo and Delta States, and that the effect of an employee's position does not vary between the two states. This suggests that the hierarchical dynamics influencing grievance resolution are a systemic feature of the Nigerian public sector bureaucracy, rather than being unique to a specific state's administrative culture. Both states operate under similar civil service structures and procedural norms, which likely



leads to a consistent experience of hierarchical privilege across different locations. This uniformity is consistent with the findings of Chukwuemeka *et al.* (2012), who pointed to systemic issues like leadership ineffectiveness and poor funding as drivers of conflict, factors that are likely prevalent across different state bureaucracies. From a TQM perspective, this lack of variation implies that the "quality" of the grievance process is consistently flawed in its application across different ranks, irrespective of the geographic or administrative context of the state.

## **5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Summary of Findings**

The study found that an employee's hierarchical position has a statistically significant influence on their perceived timeliness of grievance resolution, with higher-ranking staff perceiving the process as faster than their junior counterparts. However, there was no significant difference in the perceived timeliness of grievance resolution between employees in Imo and Delta States. Finally, the analysis revealed no significant interaction effect between an employee's position and their state of employment, indicating that the influence of hierarchy on perceived timeliness is consistent across both states.

### **5.2. Conclusion**

This study concludes that within the public sector ministries and parastatals of Imo and Delta States, an employee's position in the organizational hierarchy is a significant predictor of how timely they perceive grievance resolution to be. This systemic disparity, where lower-ranking staff experience longer resolution times, points to a fundamental inequity in the application of organizational justice. The consistency of this finding across both states suggests the issue is a widespread feature of the public sector bureaucracy, undermining the principles of fairness and the quality of internal processes as envisioned by Total Quality Management theory.

### **5.3. Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations should be considered.

1. The Heads of Civil Service in Imo and Delta States should mandate a standardized, time-bound grievance resolution framework across all ministries and parastatals to eliminate delays that disproportionately affect junior staff.
2. Human Resource managers within government ministries must implement a transparent tracking system for all filed grievances to monitor resolution times and ensure procedural fairness for employees at every level.
3. Public service unions should actively advocate for the rights of their junior and casual staff members by regularly auditing the timeliness of grievance outcomes and challenging systemic inequities in the resolution process.





#### 5.4. Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the literature on organizational justice by empirically demonstrating that an employee's hierarchical position is a significant factor in their perception of grievance resolution timeliness within the Nigerian public sector. By moving beyond general assessments of grievance systems, it provides specific evidence of systemic inequality, showing that lower-ranking employees experience the process as less efficient. Furthermore, its comparative analysis of two states suggests that this hierarchical bias is a systemic feature of public sector bureaucracy, rather than a localized issue, thereby filling a critical gap in understanding how procedural justice is experienced differently across organizational ranks.

#### Competing Interest

The authors have declared that no conflict of interest exist in this paper.

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